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Fifty-second Session

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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by General Hugo Banzer Suárez, Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia.

General Hugo Banzer Suárez, Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia, His Excellency General Hugo Banzer Suárez, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Banzer Suárez (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to convey the congratulations of the Government and the people of Bolivia to you, Mr. President. Your well-deserved election is fitting recognition of your work and prestige.

Allow me also to commend the work of Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, who so ably conducted the deliberations of the previous session of the General Assembly.

Finally, my congratulations go as well to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose contributions to the cause of world peace and cooperation have earned him the unanimous gratitude of the Member States of this Organization.

All the countries of Latin America, in one way or another and each at its own pace, have put long decades of ideological confrontation and economic crisis behind them. They have opened their markets, controlled inflation, reduced the deficit and privatized public enterprises. They have rebuilt their democratic institutional structures on new foundations, with new protagonists, and restarted the process of growth.

However, old structural adjustment problems, aggravated by the period of crisis, have surfaced. Clearly the most important of these is the inequitable distribution of income and its results: exclusion, poverty, violence and social fragmentation. Such inequities have created ever-greater gaps between the immensely rich and those who have barely enough to survive. There are no social security systems to protect the dispossessed, to cushion their fall and rehabilitate them so that they can live a productive life. For this reason, the potential for violence and discontent on our continent is growing larger and more dangerous.

These factors aside, however, Latin America meets all of the necessary conditions to forge ahead and grow in that it has the capacity and courage to continue to change — to increase society's store of knowledge, create new competitive advantages, eliminate internal marginalization, reduce extreme poverty, rebuild the

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State, and speak with its own voice in the world political community.

Education stands out as a vital precondition for all of these goals. Without a far-reaching revolution in the area of education, we will not be able to achieve these goals or meet the challenges of our time.

Today, Latin America is no longer asking others for what it cannot do on its own. Proof of this is the significant progress recently made in strengthening mechanisms for economic integration, such as the Andean Group and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR). The region is also taking a different approach in its relations with the economically advanced countries. The old defensive and mistrustful attitude has yielded to the conviction that it is necessary to merge Latin America's economy into the contemporary current of productive and technological development, attract investments and open its markets to its products while preserving its identity, upholding its values and attending to its interests, without for an instant losing sight of the fact that the key to its strength lies in its own markets and in its resources.

Let me reiterate Bolivia's concern about landmines. It is incomprehensible that those very same borders across which we are seeking to promote trade and integration should be sown with devices of war that endanger the civilian population and threaten their fundamental rights. We are convinced that the Governments of the region directly affected by the problem will find a way to resolve it.

This matter is of particular and direct relevance to Bolivia, due to the well-known and acknowledged fact that Chile has laid a significant number of mines along our common border. Removal of those mines is of the utmost urgency, in keeping with the commitments entered into in Oslo, the dictates of morality and the imperative of the spirit of integration that should prevail between neighbouring nations. Avoidance of this topic is not the attitude that the international community wishes to see. What is needed is firm resolve and the sincere will to contribute to peace between countries that must impart a sense of solidarity to their borders.

Since the early days of its independence, Bolivia has rejected the use of force and the arms race as an instrument of its foreign policy. We have the moral authority, therefore, to condemn those commercial interests that seek to foster the procurement of war *matériel*, thereby compromising what we have achieved so far in terms of preserving peace on the continent.

I have sought to describe the process of change in Latin America in order to show the extent to which developments in each of our countries are part of a broader and more comprehensive historical trend. However, Bolivia's transformation has its own particular features. Following a lengthy process of social confrontation, we have restored democracy and economic freedoms in Bolivia. In a spirit of respect for human rights and freedoms, we have given full support to the political system and fuelled the economic growth and development that prevail today in Bolivia. It should be underscored that this was a peaceful reconstruction process — the result of democratic dialogue.

My Government, the product of a mandate of the people, represents more than 70 per cent of the Bolivian electorate. Nonetheless, we must continue to move forward and broaden the scope of dialogue and consensus, involving social institutions and their leaders in the task of identifying the main objectives of development in Bolivia as well as the broad outlines of our strategy for the twenty-first century. That is the purpose of the national dialogue that I have recently called for, which has the support of all the political parties — Government and opposition; the church; private enterprise; and farmers and workers.

Of course, this new country we are building is looking to the future from a different perspective and with a sense of renewed confidence. The time has come to reaffirm Bolivia's role on our continent — its role as a crossroads and as a land of contacts, at the juncture of the great basins and the great cultures of America. Bolivia's key geographical position may become one of its major comparative advantages and an essential element in enhancing the country's international stature.

However, this is not yet a reality. It is a task that remains to be accomplished, a promise that remains to be fulfilled. To this end, Bolivia will need to rebuild its maritime capacity; reduce the transportation cost of its products; and create a modern export sector and connect it with the Pacific and the Atlantic. We must see and understand our country as a part of the continent.

Bolivia's association with MERCOSUR is not only the result of a desire to cultivate a historical friendship but also a consequence of the concrete needs of Bolivian development. The exceptional growth in the eastern areas

of Bolivia calls for a more intense and productive relationship with our neighbours on the Atlantic.

That effort coincides with one of the most impressive development ventures in the history of America, which is taking place now on the territories of Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay. Investments and technology must be allowed to flow freely in that region. We must set up a genuine common market, a multinational development project, around this potential, which should also promote the integration of our countries into the world economy. It is well known that the Paraguay-Paraná waterway is the natural route linking the area.

That major project, however, has already gone beyond the imagination of the visionaries and the negotiating tables of the diplomats. It is now in the hands of engineers and workers. After more than 30 years of efforts, construction has begun on the Santa Cruz-San Pablo-Curitiba gas pipeline, the first segment of a network of energy distribution for which Bolivia's territory provides the crossroads. This is one of the largest engineering projects in the history of the region. It will stretch for more than 3,000 kilometres, will carry more than 7 billion cubic feet of natural gas over 20 years and will require a total investment of nearly $5 billion.

Bolivia's very existence is directly tied to the Pacific. Accordingly, we have been following with great interest the process of consolidating the vast potential of the Andean community. That potential is also found in our immediate vicinity. The economies of Bolivia, Peru and Chile are complementary.

Our territories are not only markets, but avenues for integration. The territories of Peru and Chile hold Bolivia's gateway to the Pacific, while that of Bolivia opens up communication between those nations and the vast interior of the continent.

I must stress, however, that the reality still falls far short of the potential. The reason for this is to be found in a war that took place just over 100 years ago, and whose adverse consequences continue to be felt in the relations between our countries. Undoubtedly, the most unjust and serious of those consequences is the geographical enclosure imposed upon Bolivia.

Bolivia's demand to return to the Pacific Ocean, with sovereign rights and a coastline of its own cannot be renounced. It is a vital condition for our national development but, above all, a historical claim that cannot be compromised. The recovery of our maritime access, temporarily lost, is an essential condition for fulfilling our continental role as a crossroads and a point of convergence. My country will turn to the international community as many times as necessary in order to call attention to a problem that has already been deemed a matter of permanent hemispheric interest in the light of its many implications for continental security and harmony. Despite everything, my Government, as always, remains ready to explore avenues of constructive dialogue with an open mind.

Illicit drug trafficking unjustly distorts the reality of Bolivia and affects and interferes with the proper conduct of external cooperation. Bolivia itself has done a great deal to contain this problem. It has not permitted drug trafficking to taint beyond repair its economic, institutional and political structure. And it has done so peacefully, without resorting to violence. Nevertheless, the stigma of drug trafficking exists, and while we are disturbed by the manner in which it is magnified, it would be a mistake to ignore it.

Accordingly, my Government has taken the decision to remove Bolivia from the drug-trafficking circuit within the term of my administration. We shall use dialogue and consultation with peasant producers of coca in order definitively to eradicate illegal crops. We shall be ruthless with the drug traffickers. We shall not give them a moment's rest until they have been for ever banned from the history of Bolivia.

Naturally, this is not an exclusively Bolivian problem, nor can our actions alone resolve the global and hemispheric problem of illegal trafficking in narcotics. It is a matter that concerns all and that requires everyone's commitment. Therefore, the time has come to reaffirm the principles of shared responsibility. The characteristics and scope of this problem mean that it cannot be faced effectively through isolated efforts. It undeniably calls for resolute action by all countries, especially those affected by consumption and who have sufficient economic resources to combat this terrible evil.

My country reaffirms its commitment to the peace process in the Middle East in keeping with the principles and values that guide harmonious coexistence between peoples. However, given the resurgence of tensions and new acts of confrontation, we call upon the parties not to go back on the commitments already made. That is the firm answer for maintaining peace in the region.

In another vein, Bolivia has received with satisfaction the Secretary-General's initiative proposing a broad programme of reforms in the United Nations system. We feel it is essential to strengthen the role of the Secretariat. We reiterate the importance of the process of expansion and reform of the Security Council with a view to correcting present imbalances, guaranteeing equitable and non-discriminatory geographical distribution, improving its decision-making mechanisms and making it an organ that can take action in a manner that is increasingly legitimate and representative of the countries that make up the United Nations. Bolivia shares the view that we should move towards the elimination of the veto, limiting its use in the interim to issues considered under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Bolivia reiterates its commitment to the principles that have guided global solidarity for more than 50 years. We Bolivians believe that there can be no relinquishing of the standards that establish mutual respect and the sovereign equality of States, regardless of their size or level of development. Nor can we surrender the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, the inviolability and integrity of territories and respect for self-determination of peoples that wish to preserve their own systems of life and Government, free from threats.

If there is a lesson to be learned from the experience of the century now drawing to a close, it is the versatility of the human endeavour. Mankind has an incorrigible tendency to make mistakes, but also a talent for correcting them and for building from the rubble the new portals of freedom and faith.

With the approach of the new millennium, at an hour that is both dusk and dawn, we must look upon the events of the world from the dual perspective of humility and hope.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

General Hugo Banzer Suárez, Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The next speaker on my list is His Excellency Mr. Martin Andjaba, Chairman of the delegation of Namibia. I give him the floor.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We have no doubt that your diplomatic tact will steer the deliberations of this important session to a fruitful conclusion. My delegation will lend you its full cooperation as you embark on the difficult task ahead of you.

Let me now pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, your predecessor, who conducted our work during the fifty-first session in a highly remarkable manner.

Our tribute goes also to the former Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his distinguished leadership during his tenure. We are most grateful to him for his tireless efforts in upholding the objectives of the Organization.

The present Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, hails from a country that paved the road towards freedom and national independence in our part of the world. The first leader of his country, Mr. Kwame Nkrumah, was a main catalyst in Africa's fight against colonial domination. We have no doubt that all these attributes, together with his long-standing experience in the affairs of the United Nations, will contribute to the revitalization and democratization of the Organization. We congratulate him on his election as Secretary-General, and we assure him of our full support and cooperation.

At the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, world leaders recaptured the vision of the founding fathers of our Organization. They did so in recognition of the need to map out the institutional framework and operational parameters necessary to forge the effectiveness and continued relevance of the United Nations in this ever-changing international arena. It is that momentum that must be the driving force in our quest for a reformed, revitalized and democratized United Nations.

Reform is a process. As long as the United Nations exists and the world continues to change, reform will be necessary. Namibia therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's report of 16 July 1997 on the reform of the United Nations. Let me place on record that Namibia welcomes and supports reform which enhances the

capacity of the United Nations to effectively address the critical development concerns of developing countries. In this context, let me emphasize that we attach utmost importance to the operational activities of the United Nations, for they complement our development efforts. Any reform in this area must strengthen their scope of excellence. As the Secretary-General rightly puts it in his report on the work of the Organization, "times of transformation can be times of confusion" [*A/52/1, para. 20*]. Managerial issues, therefore, must not and cannot be confused with policy matters. We have long recognized that it is the General Assembly that is best equipped by the Charter to provide the necessary representative leadership. And this authority of the General Assembly my delegation shall seek to uphold.

Reform must not be retrogressive. It must continue to enhance and build on those gains we have made over the years. And, therefore, savings to be realized from reform measures should be channelled — and rightly so — to

> "the Organization's highest priority, alleviating poverty and enhancing the prospects of developing countries". [*A/51/950, letter of transmittal*]

The recent reform proposals by the Secretary-General are, in our view, part of an ongoing process. We must not resist change; nor should we lose sight of the long-term implications of our actions of today. We need to do it now, but we must do it right.

In his address to the General Assembly, the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), President Robert Mugabe, reiterated the position of the OAU on the reform and democratization of the Security Council. Let me supplement his remarks by emphasizing that Namibia is opposed to categories of permanent membership of the Security Council. As we continue to seek ways and means to reform the Security Council, we must not replace a speedy process with haste. Hence, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council should be the forum to search for and reach a consensus on the matter.

What besets the United Nations today is not merely an unmanageable structure. The Organization is subjected to financial limitations. Reform cannot supplant the Charter obligation of Member States to honour their financial obligations. Voluntary contributions, therefore, must not be seen as a means to pave the way towards resolving the current financial crisis. My Government welcomes the idea of the establishment of a revolving credit fund, capitalized at a level of up to $1 billion through voluntary contributions or through other appropriate means which may be agreed. However, our Organization can execute its mandate to the fullest only when all Member States equip it to do so. We all must honour our assessed contributions in line with international agreements, not in line with unilateral decisions.

The creation of a development account is viewed by my Government as a good idea. However, all mandated programmes and activities should be implemented, including reimbursement to troop contributors for United Nations peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, any reduction in posts must not compromise the effectiveness of the United Nations; more important, it must be carried out on the basis of geographical equity.

Since 1996 we have witnessed positive progress in the field of disarmament. A Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been concluded, and the Chemical Weapons Convention has come into force. In addition, an agreement was reached by the parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction to intensify efforts to negotiate verification provisions. However, despite these developments, nuclear weapons and their proliferation continue to be a cause of concern to the international community. With the conclusion of the CTBT, it is still our hope that serious negotiations will begin on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In this connection, we call upon the nuclear-weapon States to undertake, within the shortest possible time frame, to carry out effective nuclear disarmament measures. The total elimination of these weapons is the only genuine guarantee for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Namibia is among many countries still facing the bitter experience of the effects of landmines, which have claimed and continue to claim human lives, and which pose serious obstacles to the reconstruction and development process. Thus, we support the international community's move towards a total ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines and its continuous and tireless efforts across the globe to clear minefields.

In this connection, we welcome the treaty recently concluded in Oslo, Norway, to ban anti-personnel

landmines. Namibia is ready to sign the treaty in Ottawa. Let me express our profound gratitude and great appreciation to those countries which are supporting Namibia's demining activities, thus enhancing our development prospects.

Our world is merging into one globally encompassing dynamo of change, or so it is perceived, characterized by *inter alia* economic integration. Are developing countries to become victims or beneficiaries of this process? Suffice it to emphasize that globalization and liberalization are not ends in themselves. They are means to greater efficiency, higher growth and increased welfare. It is common knowledge that the much talked about benefits of globalization and liberalization of the world economy continue to elude the majority of developing countries, particularly those in Africa. At the same time, while the debt burden continues to hamper many of the development efforts of our economies, official development assistance is on the decline. Instead, new and innovative ideas for generating funds for globally agreed commitments and priorities are being brought into play, some of which are clearly shifting the overall burden of financing development to the developing countries which already have limited financial resources.

Namibia is strongly of the view that if the twin process of globalization and liberalization of the world economy is to benefit all countries, developing countries must have free access to world markets without conditions. It should not be a matter of the survival of the fittest. The limitations of many of our countries to compete should be compensated for by maintaining preferential treatment of developing countries.

Much has been said about global development trends, of Africa's efforts to carve a larger slice of the world economic cake, of our striving for economic empowerment and competitiveness, of our movement towards regional integration and harmonization, and of our efforts to put in place an enabling environment for trade, investment and capital flows on a national and regional level.

At the same time, at the recent International Monetary Fund Economic Forum it was said that over the decade spanning 1985 to 1995 developing countries increased their share of world trade from 23 per cent to 29 per cent. They also diversified their trade linkages in response to major changes in trade and exchange regimes in the direction of more outward-looking and open policies.

While it is stated that developing countries have more than doubled their real per capita income over the last 30 years, in reality only Asia has made relative progress; thus, the gap in living standards between the advanced economies and Africa continues to widen.

The distribution of gains from increases in both trade and foreign direct investment remains very skewed, with a few getting the most. Africa still participates in world trade with foreign direct investment flows of less than 4 per cent.

Therefore, as we continue to welcome the bright projected global outlook, we should not lose sight of the wide divergence across nations and regions. Today, for many African nations, global optimism coexists with local pessimism. There is a need, then, to open and expand our economies, to increase our competitiveness, to empower our people and to improve their well-being. To this end, the international community should support Africa's need to effectively participate in multilateral trade discussions, with a strengthened capacity for negotiations in such forums. Full implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa is one effective way of addressing Africa's limited capacity to take advantage of the global outlook.

We in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have long recognized that the path to globalization is regional integration. To equalize power relationships in the global setting, regional integration is a strategic imperative. To this end, all the members of SADC have embarked upon a common strategy to promote the region as an attractive trading and investment partner, and they are actively working towards: deeper economic cooperation and integration on the basis of balance, equity and mutual respect, providing for cross-border investment, trade and movement of production factors and services; common economic, political and social value systems, enhancing entrepreneurship, competitiveness, democracy, good governance, rule of law, human rights and the eradication of poverty; and strengthened regional solidarity, peace and security.

While admittedly our region has not yet attracted a high share of foreign direct investment, political and economic risks have greatly reduced over the past years, and increasing trade and investment flows are being witnessed.

Namibia, as a member of SADC, believes in the region's potential, the opportunities for joint development and the power of collective advocacy. This will enhance efforts towards the ideals and objectives of the African Economic Community. Together we can strengthen our productivity and competitiveness in the global economy. By pooling our resources and skills, we can create a far greater market for all of us than any of our nations has.

For the accelerated development process of developing countries to take place, a strong industrial base is indispensable. In this regard, we continue to underscore the role of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which is an agency with a clear, vital and indispensable mission. UNIDO has successfully carried out its reform, and this should be recognized and supported. At this juncture, let me express Namibia's great appreciation to the Government of the United Kingdom for its decision to rejoin UNIDO. We have no doubt that this exemplary decision will be rightly emulated by other Member States.

This year during the month of June major events were witnessed here at the United Nations. The adoption of the Agenda for Development and the review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 are cases in point. We view the outcome of these two events as complementary. Neither replaces the other. The commitments we made in Rio remain valid and need full — not selective — implementation.

The United Nations has a major role to play in promoting international cooperation. It took the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development four years to reach consensus. Mobilization of resources for its implementation is of the utmost importance, for those who are to benefit from it cannot wait another four years. Development must be one of the centrepieces of United Nations activities. In this context, we welcome the proposal to appoint a Deputy Secretary-General. In our view the Deputy Secretary-General should concentrate on United Nations development activities.

Namibia is one of those countries seriously affected by desertification and drought. In a few days, the first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, will take place in Rome. We underscore the utmost importance of establishing an independent financial mechanism to make arrangements conducive to the implementation of this Convention. To this end, we look forward with great expectation to the outcome of the first Conference of the Parties.

Namibia supports the establishment of an international criminal court, with its jurisdiction being limited to "hard-core crimes": crimes of genocide, serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in armed conflict and crimes against humanity. The principle of complementarity should be clearly spelled out in the statute. The international criminal court must complement and not supplant national criminal jurisdictions. A balance between the international criminal court and the national jurisdictions will therefore have to be struck in order to make the international criminal court fully functional.

We are two years from the end of this century and the beginning of a new millennium. We have the opportunity to reflect on how we have fared in elevating the human race to greater heights. In this context, my Government would like to congratulate both Mrs. Mary Robinson, the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Secretary-General's Special Representative to study the impact of armed conflict on children. Both of them have challenging responsibilities to assist Member States in very important but difficult tasks.

In 1998 we will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government and people of Namibia have embraced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights inasmuch as our Constitution embodies those principles and values that we were denied for so long and that we will cherish and pass on to new generations to come. Furthermore, 1998 will mark the fifth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights. This will be a time to reflect and to rededicate ourselves to our collective responsibility to save successive generations from the scourge of massive and grave human rights violations.

It is also our responsibility to redouble our efforts towards the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development as well as to pay equal attention to the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights.

No country has been spared the onslaught of drug trafficking and the alarming geographical spread of organized crime in its various forms. This undermines our development process and threatens human rights and

fundamental freedoms, and thus causes regression in the quality of our lives. In this context, my Government supports the convening of the special session of the General Assembly on the question of drugs next year. This will provide the international community with an ample opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to combat this global problem.

Time and again we have all affirmed the link between peace and development. In this context, we are pleased that the United Nations has decided to discuss the concept of the "culture of peace" during this session of the General Assembly. We support the current efforts before the United Nations for a comprehensive strategy to be adopted towards this end.

My delegation remains deeply perturbed by the situation in Angola. In this regard, we feel strongly that the phasing out of a United Nations presence in Angola must hinge on the situation on the ground. The United Nations Observer Mission in Angola was established to keep the peace in that country. It should not break the fragile peace through premature withdrawal. In this respect, the commitment of the parties to the full and unconditional implementation of the Lusaka Protocol is paramount. UNITA must therefore rise above the present impasse to contribute to a final and lasting solution to the problem in Angola.

We commend the Secretary-General's efforts in the Republic of Congo, and we are keeping our hopes alive for a speedy resolution to that problem.

We welcome the new Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we call upon the international community to render all necessary assistance to the Government and people of that country as they embark on the road to national reconciliation and reconstruction.

After seven years of tragic civil war in Liberia, my delegation hails the peace which has finally dawned in that country. It is our hope that it will be a lasting peace. We salute the people of Liberia for their good sense. Peace cannot sustain itself. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to support the Government and people of Liberia in their national reconciliation and reconstruction efforts to keep and consolidate peace and stability.

Our hearts bleed when we consider the situation that has unfolded in Sierra Leone, which has been responsible for the regression of the reconstruction efforts in that country. The Government of the Republic of Namibia condemned the *coup d'état* in Sierra Leone then and does so now. Namibia calls for the continued isolation of the military regime in that country. We therefore welcome the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

We note with satisfaction the progress made during the recent negotiations between the parties on Western Sahara. We encourage them to continue to search for a final solution to that problem. We reiterate our call for the early exercise by the Sahraoui people of their right to self-determination on the basis of a free, fair and transparent referendum in Western Sahara, under the joint supervision and control of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

We reiterate the concern of the OAU about the conflict between Libya and the United States of America and the United Kingdom over the Lockerbie tragedy. While we regret the loss of life as a result of this tragedy, other innocent people continue to suffer as a result of the subsequent sanctions imposed on Libya. We call for an urgent solution to this problem.

The Government of Namibia has reiterated on many occasions that the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba should start to walk the distance of 90 miles towards reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. We hoped to see our aspirations come about. However, these aspirations are being shattered by the new escalation in the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba through the application of the Helms-Burton Act. Notwithstanding this, we shall keep our hopes alive.

The construction of new settlements in the occupied territories of Palestine is not conducive to peace in the Middle East. We therefore call on the Government authorities in Israel to desist from such acts. Peace in the Middle East is in the interest of all parties concerned. We call on the parties to resume negotiations.

Let me conclude by stating the obvious: Peace is cheaper than war. Let us all unite our efforts to make the world a haven of peace.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Domingo L. Siazon, Jr., Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

Mr. Siazon (Philippines): I am pleased to extend to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, our most sincere felicitations on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We also wish to congratulate His Excellency Tan Sri Razali Ismail, our colleague in the Assembly and our partner in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), for his strong leadership as the President of the fifty-first session.

We take great pleasure in congratulating His Excellency Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We commit ourselves to working with him for the improvement of our Organization.

Next year the Philippines will commemorate the centenary of its proclamation of independence. Next year also the Philippines is scheduled to conduct the most sacred exercise that democracy requires: electing national leaders through the popular will. As we mark our first century as the first Republic to arise in Asia, and as we prepare to choose those who will lead our country into the twenty-first century, we reflect on what we have achieved as a country and as a member of our community of nations. Today peace reigns in my country. Where there was strife, there is now national reconciliation. Where there was violent rebellion, there is now progress and hope.

Last year, with the wisdom and guidance of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), in particular the OIC's Committee of Six, under the enlightened leadership of Indonesia and with the active support of Libya, the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) concluded a historic agreement that brought peace to Mindanao after more than a quarter century of open secessionist rebellion. The leader of the MNLF is now the elected Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and Chairman of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development. MNLF fighters are now being integrated into the armed forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

Indeed, there is much for us to celebrate as a nation and as a Republic. And this gives us even greater reason to reflect on the world and to ask ourselves fundamental questions about its present state and its emerging future.

One such question that comes to mind is this: Is our world a safer place? The end of the cold war has in a sense made it so. But is the world safe enough when we continue to live under the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction? Fortunately, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty last year and the ongoing review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons give us some added security.

We must not stop here. Let us pursue negotiations on the complete and total elimination of nuclear weapons by a certain time. This call is already supported by the International Court of Justice, which last year recognized that all States have an obligation to pursue such negotiations in good faith.

On 27 March 1997 the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty entered into force. On that day, the world of nuclear weapons became much smaller. We now urge the nuclear-weapon States to support the Treaty by becoming parties to its Protocol. At this session we will once again consider the initiative of consolidating existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and of promoting cooperation among them with a view to the total elimination of such weapons.

Global safety also demands control of the proliferation of conventional arms, particularly small arms and anti-personnel landmines, whether deployed or in national stockpiles. In Oslo earlier this month the Ottawa process produced, after less than a year, the text of a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. We will sign this treaty in December. We will also continue to support the noble efforts of the Organization, of individual Governments and of non-governmental organizations to clear minefields, to assist mine victims and to rehabilitate areas plagued by these infernal devices.

At the dawn of the post-cold-war era, we must acknowledge that the potential for the most serious conflict has shifted almost entirely from the global to the regional level. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, in response to this new reality, has led in creating the ASEAN Regional Forum, a ministerial-level, multilateral forum for promoting regional-security dialogue and cooperation. Today in the Asia-Pacific region dialogue and cooperation are the pre-eminent modes for securing peace.

However, the disputes in the South China Sea remain a source of tension for our region. In 1992, ASEAN issued, at Manila, a Declaration on the South China Sea, which called for the settlement of disputes exclusively by peaceful means and for the exercise of self-restraint by all of the claimants. Other States have

endorsed this Declaration. We are determined to advance towards a settlement of these disputes in conformity with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, while avoiding all acts inimical to stability and a sense of security in the region.

Like many here, we were saddened by the recent events in the political life of Cambodia. We in ASEAN have initiated a dialogue to address the Cambodian issue, even as we look forward to the early admission of Cambodia into the ASEAN family.

On the Korean peninsula, we hope that the current talks will lead not only to large dividends of peace but also to greater cooperation towards economic growth and progress for East Asia.

In South Africa, following the collapse of apartheid, we are witnessing bold and sincere efforts towards deeper national reconciliation. In other parts of Africa we see active regional cooperation to promote peace and justice in the aftermath of terrible conflicts. In Liberia, in particular, we welcome the holding of free and fair elections with the support of the international community, led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In the Middle East, peace is gravely imperilled by terrorism and political aggression. We call on all parties to renounce all forms of violence and intimidation to preserve the peace process that was begun only a few years ago to the applause of the whole world.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where much remains to be done, we regret the deterioration of civil order and condemn the violence directed against United Nations personnel.

In Latin America, we welcome the honourable termination of the civil war that had raged in Guatemala for 36 years.

Is the world a safer place for the world itself? The environment of our planet is under threat. Our response must be to accelerate implementation of Agenda 21 in line with the programme adopted last June. As a priority, we must address the lack of financial resources, technology, know-how and international cooperation that inhibits the promotion of worldwide sustainable development.

This December we will meet again to discuss a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to control harmful emissions. We must agree now on emission reduction targets, particularly for those who have emitted too much for far too long.

How safe, we should also ask, is the world for the individual human being? We can answer positively only when it becomes universally accepted that every human being has rights inherent in his or her person, and that all basic rights — political, civil, social and economic — must be in balanced harmony with one another. Thus, as long as human rights are violated, as long as the right to development is vitiated, as long as the rights of women are not fully respected, as long as people are traded like chattels, as long as migrant workers, especially women migrant workers, are abused and exploited, we cannot say that the world is a safer place for the individual human person.

We must protect our women. We must act on the decisions we reached in Beijing, and we must do more to deepen and broaden respect for the rights of women through the use of existing human rights agreements and mechanisms.

We must protect our children. We must effectively implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and we must append to this Convention a protocol that would organize global measures against child slavery, prostitution and pornography.

In addition, we call for universal adherence to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

The protection of human rights finds its most effective guarantees in democracy. Any threat to democracy also poses a direct and indirect threat to the rights of the human person. Today, in many countries, including my own, democracy is no longer endangered by the extreme political left or right. Rather, the threats to democracy are more base and more insidious. Among them are terrorism and the illicit traffic in narcotics.

With the objective of creating a regional consensus on how best to address the issue of illicit drugs and other transnational crimes, the Philippines will next year host the regional ministerial meeting for Asia and the Pacific on organized transnational crime and corruption. For this meeting, we hope to take inspiration from and add to the consensus achieved in the regional meetings held in Africa and Latin America.

Our efforts to make the world a safer place, and to safeguard the rights of the individual, would lose much of their meaning if we were unable to answer the basic question: have the opportunities for growth and economic progress improved?

The rising tide of globalization has brought unprecedented opportunities for the developed and developing worlds alike. The acceptance of market-oriented development and of free trade by an increasing number of developing nations has expanded their participation in the growth and commerce of the global economy. Yet the benefits of globalization remain unevenly distributed. Developing countries still suffer from the old problems of external debt and of protectionism in developed-country markets.

The recent currency turbulence in East Asia, the region with the best long-term growth prospects in the world, is a sobering reminder that globalization can cause instability even where it has generated the greatest growth. The existence of unbridled international speculation and of other market ills that hinder rather than help development is a powerful rationale for strengthening the United Nations role in global development.

Only in the United Nations can we work to share, among rich and poor nations alike, the burden of structural adjustment imposed by globalization. Only within the United Nations system can we mobilize concerted global action to support progress in the poor regions of the globe, particularly in Africa, whose needs call for special attention.

The Bretton Woods system and the multilateral development banks also need reform. Global flows of multilateral development financing have to be increased, especially since bilateral official development assistance is declining.

Countries that wish to reduce their share in the financing of the United Nations should be willing to do the same in international financial institutions, so that those that want to increase their contributions to these institutions are able to do so without hindrance.

Another fundamental question we must ask is: are we ready, as an Organization of States, as nations united, to face the challenges of tomorrow? The short answer is "No".

For this reason, the Philippines strongly believes that we must immediately embark upon the reform of the United Nations. We need to enhance the capacity of the world body to meet the exigencies of modern times. A fundamental objective of reform should be to restore development to the centre of the United Nations agenda.

The Philippines, therefore, endorses the recommendations of the Open-ended High Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. If properly implemented, they could render the General Assembly more effective in fulfilling its Charter responsibilities.

Our Secretary-General has given us a report on his own reform proposals. These deserve the serious consideration of the General Assembly. We appreciate the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on development.

We also need to accelerate discussions on the reform of the Security Council. In this regard, we welcome the progress that has been made in clarifying and identifying the elements that must be negotiated if we are to move towards any expansion of the membership of the Council.

The Philippines favours the enlargement of the membership of the Council in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. Security Council membership should be more representative of the world's developing regions and more reflective of modern global realities. New permanent members should enjoy the same rights as current permanent members. The use of the veto should be limited to actions under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Talking of reform is good. But our talk will lead nowhere if our Organization does not have the resources required to improve and revitalize itself. We survived the balance of terror of the cold war. Let us now work on balancing our cheque-books in the post-cold-war era. There is much irony in this. The end of the cold war should also have meant an end to the astronomical finances spent on deterrence. It might have been reasonable to expect that a fraction of those finances could now be shared to help the United Nations promote world peace, progress and prosperity.

Yet this is obviously not the case. The Secretary-General's proposed revolving credit fund of $1 billion, to be financed though voluntary contributions or other means — if it materializes — may provide temporary

relief. However, there is a real danger that this proposal will encourage those in arrears to delay further their payments to the Organization.

The Philippines is in favour of reform. But reforming the United Nations should not be seen as an opportunity to hold our Organization to ransom. We are all in favour of reforming and strengthening the United Nations. But setting benchmarks of reform should not be a precondition for a Member State to pay its assessed contributions.

In the 100 years since my country declared its independence, war and occupation, dictatorship and partisan politics have at one time or another endangered our democracy. And in those eventful 100 years, we have cultivated certain insights that might prove relevant to us here today. We have learned, as a country, that we must cherish the ideals of democracy in all aspects of our national life, including in our dealings with other nations.

After my people emerged victorious in our last major battle with forces opposed to democracy over a decade ago, we resolved to share our experience with the rest of the world. Thus, we organized in Manila the first meeting of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) in 1988. From the 13 nations that first met in Manila, ICNRD has grown to 76 countries today. I congratulate Romania for its successful hosting of ICNRD's third meeting earlier this month.

Given the diversity of the membership of our Organization, it is not surprising that we may have some differences even on such fundamental issues as international peace, global development and the protection of the individual. However, I submit that, if our Organization is to function properly and if Member States are to relate to each other in an effective manner, then we must all follow certain basic principles and ideals. These principles and ideals are those that democracy has taught us. Let us work together with all the creative energy at our command and with the ideals of democracy as our guiding light.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, His Excellency Mr. Prachuab Chaiyasan.

Mr. Chaiyasan (Thailand): It is with great pleasure that my delegation extends to you, Sir, its sincere congratulations on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. My delegation also wishes to take this opportunity to express its deepest appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his exceptional leadership and creative energies during the past year. I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the new dynamism which he has brought to the Organization since he took office last January.

This fifty-second session of the General Assembly takes place against the backdrop of transition and transformation in the world. The euphoria that came in the wake of the end of the cold war has given way to a sense of realism about the new, and no less formidable, challenges that confront us all in this era of globalization. The changes, led by technology and the globalization of business and information, seem endless and increasingly complex. Governments, meanwhile, face the daunting task of constantly trying to discern and adjust to the new order of international relations.

For all the changes, some legacies of the cold war are still very much with us. Nothing brings home this reality more than the unfortunate events unfolding in Cambodia. While the situation in Cambodia that confronts us today is very different from the one we faced before the signing of the Paris Peace Accord, finding a solution is no less difficult.

How can we deal with a conflict which is basically internal in character, particularly when our ability to influence events has become limited and we are overcome with the fatigue born of déjà vu? Clearly, we cannot turn our backs on Cambodia. But the reality is that we in Thailand and in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as the entire international community, can only be supportive to the extent that the Cambodians themselves are willing to give peace a chance.

Mrs. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The situation in Cambodia reflects a peculiar aspect of this brave new age we are entering. Even as the world is being transformed by sweeping global trends, some problems are so deep-rooted that they resist even the best efforts of the international community. The United Nations, no stranger itself to intractable conflicts, will continue to be one of our best hopes for resolving such situations.

While tending to such traditional challenges, the United Nations must also address the many complex new challenges brought on by the process of globalization. Indeed, globalization has come to mean different things to different people. To many, it holds out the promise of an unprecedented era of progress and prosperity. To its proponents, globalization has unleashed the forces of creativity and productivity in the world economy. Globalization has been heralded for having spread the ideas and values of democracy and freedom worldwide.

On the other hand, there are those who contend that globalization has become an all-embracing pretext for the imposition of certain sets of ideas and values. They see globalization as leading to a monopoly of economic power in the hands of a ruthless few whose sole allegiance is to the workings of market forces, while the vast majority of humanity is increasingly marginalized.

The reality most likely lies somewhere between these two extreme views. The fact of the matter is that we must all develop the capacity to cope with the effects of globalization, both positive and negative. Even the more successful developing countries have not escaped the tremendous turmoil that integration into the global market can bring on, as evidenced by the currency crisis that Thailand and many other countries in South-East Asia are going through.

Thailand's recent experience suggests that to thrive under economic globalization, developing countries have to fully understand how market forces work and to adapt themselves accordingly. Thailand has learned that financial liberalization requires a high degree of discipline from both the public and private sectors. Also crucial is the need to be vigilant in improving prudential regulations. Moreover, a more comprehensive macroeconomic analysis is needed in order to improve the monitoring of current economic conditions.

But Thailand's basic strengths remain. Our economic fundamentals are still underscored by a remarkably high savings rate, relatively low inflation and a strong tradition of market-oriented policy framework. We are firm in our commitment to free and open markets. We are also active in promoting regional cooperation and economic liberalization through such frameworks as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and various subregional development schemes.

Moreover, we are firm in our determination to achieve good governance and greater democracy. This past Saturday, the Thai Parliament approved the new draft Constitution, which emphasizes transparency, accountability and the role of public participation.

Our political reform goes hand in hand with our economic reform. We realize that we can no longer put off economic restructuring if we are to get back on track quickly. We are therefore seriously implementing the conditions of the International Monetary Fund rescue package. We are also working with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to restructure our financial system, enhance our export competitiveness and return the economy to its long-term sustainable growth through necessary reforms of the civil service, privatization, industrial restructuring and the upgrading of the quality of our workforce, our technology and our infrastructure.

I prefer to think of this crisis as a blessing in disguise. While we have done many things right in the past — including progressive industrialization and liberalization of international trade and investment — with the benefit of hindsight, the macroeconomic capability to cope with an increasingly open capital market was inadequate. Globalization of business and finance compels us to become more competitive through greater openness and transparency. Our economy is too deeply integrated into the international economic system to do anything less. We cannot fight the market; what we must do is ensure that the market works efficiently and equitably.

At the same time, Thailand's experience also shows that the United Nations has an important role to play in coordinating macroeconomic policy at the global level. Closer cooperation and coordination is needed between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and major industrial countries to provide integrated support for the enhancement of capacity-building in those countries whose economies are still weak. Globalization of course has its winners and losers. The rules of the game should therefore take into account both the weaknesses and strengths of all countries concerned.

As a universal and multi-purpose Organization, the United Nations is the only institution in the world capable of forging a global partnership among States, big and small, rich and poor, powerful and weak. No single State or region can go it alone. This is why Thailand is committed to supporting the United Nations. This is why

Thailand welcomes the reform-action initiatives and proposals recently put forward by the Secretary-General. I hope that these measures will enable the United Nations to carry out its responsibilities with increased efficiency and effectiveness. I wish the Secretary-General well on the further implementation of these proposals.

Thailand attaches great importance to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for economic and social development. We are pleased that in his reform proposals Secretary-General Kofi Annan argued that the promotion of sustainable development should be the central priority of United Nations activities. While the reform plan proposed by the Secretary-General requires more thorough consideration, Thailand can support his proposal of designating the United Nations Development Group — comprising the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund — to supersede the sectoral group of development operations. We hope that the United Nations Development Group will facilitate consolidation and cooperation among United Nations agencies without compromising their identities, so that they can respond more effectively to the needs of developing countries.

Thailand also welcomes the creation of a development dividend by shifting resources from administration to development activities. According to the reform plan, the administrative costs will be reduced by one third, the workforce will be reduced by 1,000 posts and the paperwork will be cut by 30 per cent. However, downsizing should not be an end in itself. The central element of the reform should concentrate on how to manage funds and implement programmes so as to achieve equitable development, which is our common goal.

Another important point in the Secretary-General's reform plan is the proposal to mobilize more resources for United Nations operational activities. Thailand sees the United Nations as the main forum for the creation of an equal and workable partnership between developed and developing countries — a partnership that should be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the developing world. The steady decline in voluntary contributions to core resources has inhibited the capacity of United Nations funds and programmes to play the roles assigned to them. In this regard, we support the Secretary-General's proposal on innovative means of mobilizing new financial resources for development. The private sector is potentially an important source of financial support, as demonstrated by the proposed donation of $1 billion by Mr. Ted Turner. However, the funds from the private sector should be additional to, and must not replace, official development assistance.

The restructuring of the Security Council is also a vital part of United Nations reform. Despite the end of the cold war, the anachronistic yet so powerful veto power still exists in this supposedly more democratized institution. It is heartening, however, to note that the issue has been extensively debated. Thailand and its ASEAN partners, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, believe that this veto power should be curtailed with a view to its eventual elimination. The Security Council itself should be expanded, taking into account the increase in United Nations membership to enhance its democratic and representative nature, while at the same time paying due regard to its efficiency and effectiveness.

But without the firm commitment of Member States, all these reform efforts would come to nothing. Member States have the obligation under the Charter to bear the expenses of the Organization by paying their assessed contributions in full on time and without conditions. Thailand has always taken its financial obligation seriously and has made every effort to fulfil it. For 1997 Thailand is among the 28 countries which paid their contributions to the regular budget in full and on time.

Thailand believes that one of the main tasks of the United Nations is to set standards in international law, and in recent years there has been an encouraging trend towards efforts to advance the cause of international law through the creation of legal norms and instruments. What these norms and instruments symbolize is the desire of peoples to live in a more orderly world. Thailand will continue to support and participate actively in efforts to establish an international criminal court, as well as in the elaboration of new legal instruments to combat terrorism. In December of this year, Thailand hopes to be one of the signatories of the Ottawa treaty banning all anti-personnel landmines. We believe that there is no greater crime than maiming or killing innocent civilians. It is high time that we put an end to this. At the same time, greater efforts and resources should be devoted to removing and destroying these landmines.

As a signatory of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which was concluded in Bangkok during the ASEAN summit in 1995, Thailand would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Governments of Central Asia for their initiative to establish a Central Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. Their

commendable effort adds to the strong evidence that the peoples of the world are no longer tolerant of nuclear weapons. At present, more than 100 United Nations Member States are signatories of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties in their respective regions, treaties which now cover the greater part of the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Africa, South-East Asia and, soon, Central Asia. What we are witnessing here is a new partnership, a partnership among the peoples of the world who dread nuclear arsenals and wish to eliminate these hazardous weapons of mass destruction from the face of the earth.

The international environment in which we live is evolving rapidly. During the past year, there have been many encouraging developments. But we also find ourselves confronted with new and increasingly complex challenges. In order to overcome these challenges, the United Nations as an Organization needs vision and inventiveness. But, more importantly, its Members need to speak with one voice on issues which confront mankind. If we are to succeed in doing this, a global partnership needs to be forged, be it in the area of politics, economic and social development, environmental protection or humanitarian assistance. Sooner rather than later, we should all realize that, in this globalized world, our destinies are linked together much more closely than we like to believe. The time to forge this partnership is now. The place to begin the process is here, at the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, His Excellency Mr. Fares Bouez.

Mr. Bouez (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me to extend our thanks to the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali Ismail, and to congratulate him on the way in which he fulfilled his mandate. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election and wish him complete success in his efforts to strengthen and increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in these historic times, which more than ever demand our application, perseverance, determination and good faith.

More than half a century has elapsed since the United Nations was founded. When the United Nations was born, mankind wanted it to lead to the creation of a world of justice, law and peace. The United Nations was supposed to be able to defend human rights when they were violated and promote justice. By means of the United Nations, mankind aspired to put an end to an era of war and usher in an era of peace and tolerance, of respect for national sovereignty and people's freedom and of independence of States; an era in which people would be free to fulfil their dreams and aspirations and to maintain their identity. Never in the course of human history have we needed the United Nations more than we need it today, in this era of communications and contacts, when frontiers are disappearing under the force of the technological revolution. This is an era of demographic explosion and deadly, destructive weapons; an era when the environment is no longer capable of meeting mankind's demands.

Today we are truly in need of a basic means of containing conflicts and resolving disputes. This is why we must increase the effectiveness of the United Nations mechanism and renew confidence in its justice, credibility and effectiveness, the freedom of its decision-making processes from hegemony, and the absence of imbalances in its measured ways and in the enforcement of its resolutions so that no one remains above international law. These steps are essential if we want to prevent the collapse of the United Nations, and if we want it to retain the moral authority necessary to resolve disputes and remain an alternative to hot and deadly confrontations.

Therefore, Lebanon enthusiastically supports the reform of United Nations institutions, particularly the Security Council. We call for enhancing the numerical and geographical balance of the Council so as to reflect changed realities. The Council must also be reformed to dissipate the misgivings some have about the way it performs its role.

Lebanon subscribes to the principle of rotation of the permanent seats in the Security Council. We reiterate our support for the position of the Arab Group, as expressed in the paper it presented on this subject.

We welcome the Secretary-General's proposals for the reform of the United Nations. We have given them our full attention and are carefully studying them. We believe it is necessary to enhance the role of the General Assembly and to make the issue of development a high priority for the Organization, while attaching great importance to the work of regional economic and social commissions.

Under the rubric of reducing costs and the budget, many United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), have lost much of their

ability to adequately provide social, health and education services to refugees in their host countries. This increases the burden on host countries, Lebanon among them. It is difficult for us to shoulder these responsibilities under these conditions. The responsibility of the international community in redressing the injustice inflicted on the Palestinian refugees must be made apparent. This bitter reality, which cannot be free of hidden intentions, aims at times at attempting to pressure these countries and force them to assimilate the refugee population they are hosting. This would be a step towards liquidating the refugees' case for return. It is also a means of pressuring the host countries into accepting unacceptable political terms.

The international community, represented by the United Nations and the donor countries, is duty-bound to continue to render assistance to the Palestinian refugees awaiting a political resolution of their status in accordance with the right to return, as decided upon by the United Nations and, in particular, the principle of reuniting families. This is one of the pillars of the peace process, and thus it is essential that the international community persevere until a solution is attained.

We had hoped that this session would be an occasion for us to express our gratitude for the restoration of peace in Lebanon and the Middle East. This would have been an attestation to the success of the Madrid peace process, which was launched six years ago to which should be added one year of preparation. This international peace initiative began auspiciously. We believed in both its letter and its spirit because the initiative was international, the sponsorship was effective and the contents were based upon an equitable, just and permanent peace. We were very hopeful, because we thought that peace would be realized on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), on the basis of the principle of land for peace and on the basis of finding a consensual solution to the question of Jerusalem. The initiative was also supposed to put an end to Israel's building and expansion of settlements in the occupied territories and lead to the recognition of the political rights of the Palestinian people. It was supposed to be followed by a discussion of regional arrangements to settle security, social and economic questions, in particular the question of the Palestinian refugees, thereby paving the way for the economic development of the region.

We entered into the peace process convinced that the basic elements had been accepted at Madrid and that they had become commitments of the participating States. We thought that all that remained for the delegations was to begin negotiations on implementation. However, the advent of the present Israeli Government and its head totally dashed our hopes, given the practices of this new Government. The principle of land for peace was thrown out, to be replaced by a new formula. The Israeli Government reneged on the need for implementation of international decisions, and thus demanded their reinterpretation. That Government did not want to find a solution to the question of Jerusalem, so it went ahead and annexed it. The Israeli Government reneged on its commitments with regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, so it stressed its annexation. The Israeli Government demolished the principle of halting settlement activities and vastly expanded their efforts at settlement.

The negotiated commitments of the previous Government were abandoned, as if there were no continuity from one Government to the next. Instead of making progress towards peace — the only worthwhile objective — the Government devoted itself to destroying what had been done, even if the steps previously taken were limited.

Instead of being able to work towards a genuine peace, we have had to endure propaganda manoeuvres aimed at numbing and misleading public opinion, along with meetings that were designed just to give the impression that a dialogue was continuing. Instead of trying to find a solution to the basic conflict, the emphasis shifted to the normalization of relations through economic conferences — as a precondition, even before solving the legal and political problem — instead of having normalization occur naturally as a crowning of the basic solution.

Faced with heightened internal crisis, the Israeli Government resorted to stirring up tension along its borders and in areas under occupation, to divert attention away from the peace it had scuttled. Thus, the principle of provocation and confrontation was re-established in order to create unity internally.

Israel continued to carry out its acts of aggression against southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa, once with the goal of mobilizing Israeli public opinion against peace, and another time for the purpose of emptying international initiatives of their political content.

The attacks continued, through artillery shelling, air raids, operations inside our territories — against villages and cities — against children, women, the elderly and homes. Destruction and demolition continued, as did the

detention of Lebanese citizens in Israeli military camps — all of this without the United Nations international institutions being allowed to visit them. They were not permitted the enjoyment of elementary human rights: the right to counsel and the right to a fair trial. Some of them were returned to us as corpses, while others were tortured or maimed — and this in the era of respect for the rights of environment, of plants, and of animals.

Nonetheless, the more the occupation endured, the more Israel became increasingly bogged down in the quagmire of the south which became an inferno to it. The occupier has become a prisoner, and the aggressor a hostage in the face of a valiant people's steadfastness and the resistance of its sons and daughters. Thus Israel sustained huge losses which is prompting it to rethink the viability and usefulness of its continued occupation of southern Lebanon.

Against this reality, we heard, through misleading media reports, of an Israeli readiness to withdraw.

We have to bring the truth forth. Lebanon's firm stance has always been for a complete Israeli withdrawal to internationally recognized borders so as to enable the Lebanese State to exercise its sovereignty over its territories through its own forces. But Israel does not wish to withdraw; it is still camouflaging its unwillingness to withdraw completely by relocating or redeploying its forces. It continues to cast a smoke screen by asking to maintain inspection and control posts, by imposing conditions that limit the State's authority and by giving the upper hand to the militias that it created. Furthermore, Israel is attempting to impose control over the Lebanese Army, which could be deployed, as well as other conditions that challenge any presumed Lebanese sovereignty when withdrawal takes place.

I should like to pay tribute to our fallen heroes, members of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) — most recently four Italian soldiers and an Irish sergeant. Their blood was spilled in defence of southern Lebanon, mixing with that of Lebanese citizens. I should also like to pay tribute to the Force itself, whose commanders and troops are discharging a difficult task under the most difficult and most trying circumstances.

No sooner had the people of the region begun to adapt to the anticipated climate of peace than they were thrust back into an era of confrontation, violence and inevitable defiance and resistance. Though development plans for the Middle East region were being formulated, and the world manifested interest in its peaceful future, caution and pessimism began once again to prevail, and hopes were dashed. No sooner had the Government of Israel drawn strength from the veto power used against Security Council resolutions on its settlement policies, it has continued to challenge Council resolutions, thereby undermining whatever is left of the peace process.

The international community, which stands to be affected by the situation in the region, either directly or indirectly, must hold the defiant accountable. The international community has not only the right but also the duty to take action through the Organization of the United Nations. On many occasions, the United Nations has delegated this question to others, hoping that a solution could be found. It has consistently refrained from enforcing its resolutions, in contrast to its recent behaviour vis-à-vis many other States.

The time has come for the United Nations to reclaim its role. The time has come to return to the basics of peace as agreed in Madrid, to the principle of land for peace, to the need to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and to resume negotiations on all tracks from the point where they stopped. The time has come for Israel immediately to cease all settlement activities; to resolve the status of the city of Jerusalem; to withdraw from the Palestinian territory and recognize the political rights of the Palestinian people; to withdraw from the Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967; to fully withdraw from southern Lebanon and its western Bekaa to the internationally recognized boundaries in order to enable the Lebanese State to exercise its authority, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Opting for a peace that ignores these fundamentals is a choice that is doomed to failure, a choice that could ignite the entire region. An isolationist policy that separates the various tracks would run counter to the principle of a comprehensive peace and will never achieve it. This is because the conflict is fundamentally a comprehensive one. It has never been a conflict between one single Arab State and Israel, but has always been between the Arabs and Israel. As long as a single track is excluded from the solution, peace will remain impossible. The tracks are all intertwined, which shows how indivisible and interconnected the cause is. Nobody should think that one track can survive, even for one hour, while other tracks remain excluded.

Because Lebanon is at the heart of the conflict, it has suffered a great deal. Today, however, it is confounding all forecasts and expectations that presaged its demise by proving to the world once again, as it has done throughout its long and time-honoured history, that it is too strong to wither away, and that a right that is claimed by its people will never disappear.

When southern Lebanon and western Bekaa are liberated, when Lebanese sovereignty extends to all its territory, when the United Nations credibility is confirmed by the authority of its resolutions, when Israeli jails are emptied of their innocent detainees and resistance fighters, when an end is put to bloodshed which soaks our land, then and only then will the wound be healed. The tears will then stop and confidence will be restored to all in a genuine, just, permanent and comprehensive peace, a peace that can restore to the land of civilizations, religions and cultures the place it deserves now and in future, as it has always been throughout its long history.

The choice of peace will not always be available to us. The peace that the Assembly supported is in the throes of death today. If restoring peace seems difficult, its demise would close the door to any attempt to rekindle the process in the foreseeable future, thus putting world peace in jeopardy and sparking an uncontrollable conflagration, which will be difficult to contain.

May God guide the steps of those who are working for a peace that is just and not unfair, equitable and not biased, consensual and not imposed, a peace that honours the memory of those martyred, that does justice to those who struggle, and that would put an end to darkness in the land of the prophets and the messengers of God.

The Acting President: I call on the Chairman of the delegation of Kuwait, Mr. Mohammad Abulhasan.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to convey to the President the greetings of His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, who profoundly regrets being unable to participate personally in the debate at this session due to some pressing matters. He has requested me to deliver the following statement by Kuwait on his behalf:

> "On behalf of the State of Kuwait, it gives me pleasure to congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election as President of the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We are confident that he will be able to lead our deliberations efficiently towards a successful conclusion. The extensive experience he has gained from service at this important international institution together with the high posts he has assumed will no doubt prove valuable. Let me also underline the good relations existing between our two countries, based on mutual understanding and common interest.
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> "I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, the former President of the General Assembly, who demonstrated an impressive sense of purpose, dedication and deep perception. Under his stewardship, the Assembly reasserted its genuine importance and relevance in international relations.
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> "I wish to pay tribute to our new Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who took the helm of the Organization at the beginning of the year. Apart from being a long-time career insider at the United Nations, Mr. Annan to us now stands as a good example of the executive manager enjoying wisdom and prudence, together with integrity and commitment, that make him a living embodiment of dedication to the ideals and mission of the United Nations.
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> "In the same vein, I wish to set on record our recognition of the significant contribution of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the former Secretary-General, in leading the Organization with efficiency and confidence. Kuwait will always recognize his contributions with a deep sense of appreciation.
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> "Two years ago, the United Nations celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The mood then was optimistic about the role and capability of the Organization to cope with the lingering issues that remained without a solution over the first half century. This was due to the nature of these problems, which was aggravated by the major-Power polarization during the cold war. The sense of optimism emanated from our deep conviction that the global understanding that swept the world would eventually generate the firm will to address the outstanding problems that jeopardize international peace and security. Also, the widespread public awareness of the relevance of the United Nations would also help the Organization in resolving

pending matters. Furthermore, the impressive track record of the United Nations has earned it collective credibility regarding the vitality and flexibility of the machinery at its disposal.

"Kuwait has examined with great interest the measures and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, entitled 'Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform', which was submitted to the General Assembly in mid-July last. In this connection, we would like to register Kuwait's support for this programme and its appreciation of the efforts made by Mr. Kofi Annan and his assistants to produce this impressive achievement. The report is analytical in its approach and pragmatic in its outlook, focusing on performance efficiency without partiality. It also focused on improving the financial situation of the Organization through the institution of better internal control mechanisms and practical suggestions. The ultimate goal of all these measures is to enhance the performance of the United Nations, which would be more innovative in its operational modalities and more focused on its global concerns.

"We have noted, with appreciation, the reports submitted by a wide array of working groups on restructuring the organs of the United Nations and improving their efficiency in order to adapt the entire system to the new era following the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the post-confrontation environment. The United Nations seems poised to embark on addressing in a more comprehensive manner humanitarian, cultural, demographic and environmental issues which were not prominent on its list of priorities previously.

"Moreover, as we recognize the realities of contemporary life, we understand that the world order continues to be quite fluid, and it is indeed difficult to predict its future shape. The current stage is not a unipolar power era, as some might imagine. It is a multipolar arena, where military might is no longer the final arbiter in the definition of polarity. In fact, there exists immense technological superiority, which may enable some States to make an outstanding contribution to the shaping of global strategies. There is also the economic power that has brought together the major industrial nations in a collectivity which has a significant influence on the implementation of world strategies. This is not to mention the giant economic groupings which exist in the world of today.

"Accordingly, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council, and other Matters Related to the Security Council, which has been examining the question of reform and expansion of Security Council membership for the past four years, should take these new facts of life into consideration. Once agreed upon, the new membership composition should reflect a collective and emphatic will to address adequately the issues at hand. Permanent members of the Council should be politically capable and should be financial and troop contributors. They should also be adept at crisis management, and able to act decisively, without hesitation, when the situation warrants such action.

"In the final analysis, membership of the Security Council is not a privilege as much as it is a responsibility. It should not be a means for visibility, but a product of conviction. Our view is that the Security Council in its forthcoming composition should be a mirror reflecting a world shifting towards universalization and transparency in order to instil a better sense of security in all members of the world community, both North and South, East and West. Membership should not be divided between diverse security concepts, some favouring the North, while others are appropriate for the South.

"In this context, Kuwait affirms its full commitment to the common Arab position and to the stand of the Non-Aligned Movement, both of which were elaborated time and again in several meetings of the Open-ended Working Group.

"Undoubtedly, agreement on the concept of unconventional and common security requires in the first instance recognition of some crucial facts. The first element is the conviction that the security of humankind is universal and, in the final analysis, indivisible. The interests of members of the world community have become more and more interdependent, while civilizations and cultures are drawing closer. The daily concerns of individuals are universal in nature, requiring complex solutions, and are multidimensional in their negative impacts. The second element is the emphasis on the concept of economic and social development as a crucial factor in ensuring conventional security and collective handling of development requirements.

This also calls for the involvement of international institutions in contributions to the improvement of living conditions in the poor nations that face severe impediments in their development efforts.

"The third element is a firm belief in and commitment to the dignity of the human person as being the essence of human relations both within a given society and among nations. In effect, this means upholding the dignity of the human person in the face of bloody regimes which flagrantly violate the principles of human rights and destroy their own nations to arrogate power to themselves. This brings us to the necessity of safeguarding the principles set forth in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Charter of the United Nations.

"Fourthly, all members of the world community should adopt peaceful policies which renounce violence, recognize the legitimate interests of others and respect their rights, expand the zones of mutual interests, give due priority to development and reject the arms race. Such peaceful policies should also abstain from behaviour and political expressions which disturb peace. They should observe civilized conduct in relationships among peoples, without the pursuit of any party's privileges at the expense of others. No one should claim an imaginary historical role outside the parameters of justice, equality and the rule of law.

"The world today is indeed a small planet whose problems interact and overlap. Its pressing problems are a global responsibility. When viewed through a human and global prism, we can see that the prosperity of the North pales in the shadow of the poverty of the South. The security of Europe will not be assured against a background of a marginalized Africa. There will be little peace of mind in America in the face of a population explosion in Asia, and with the widening gap between those with an abundance of wealth and those who suffer in deprivation. Dealing with the new developments in the world environment requires the evolution of a comprehensive concept of security. Any such concept must be anchored in understanding, coexistence, common interests, and the utilization of the universal technological revolution in managing vital national projects. This concept should replace the outdated concepts of security based on the balance of power, mutual deterrence and military presence.

The President took the Chair.

"The achievements made by the United Nations should provide the Organization with a further impetus to pursue the same course it has charted since the end of the cold war.

"We welcome the movement towards the prohibition of the production, stockpiling and use of landmines. This would be yet another positive step added to similar measures, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Despite such instruments, some States continue to export weapons of mass destruction as a vital source of increased national income. We welcome the regulations that have been concluded to control arms, to reduce the level of nuclear threat, to tighten controls over the arms trade and to increase transparency regarding weapons expenditures.

"In the same vein, we cannot underestimate the achievements made in the area of peacekeeping operations, where the United Nations has managed to contain dangers and defuse crises in several instances, although many regional problems remain unresolved and constitute flash-points of tension.

"In this regard, we in Kuwait cannot but recall with admiration the firmness with which the Security Council responded to the aggression by the Iraqi regime against the State of Kuwait in August 1990. The Council's response was characterized by firmness in rejecting aggression, resoluteness in its confrontation, and decisive action to abort the aggression through a series of resolutions that made the Council's position perfectly clear. It started with rejection of aggression, then moved to deterrence, and culminated in decisive action. In all its dimensions and ramifications, that case has become a historical precedent that might constitute the basis for a solid background for dealing with any similar aggression, irrespective of its origin, against any State.

"But Iraq, despite the dire need of its people for the lifting of economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council, has not yet fulfilled basic conditions required for ending the sanctions. There is the question of Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and detainees. This is a humanitarian issue

that affects several hundred families who still do not know the whereabouts of their loved ones. Young children continue to cry, appealing for help to rescue their missing fathers. The ad hoc Tripartite Commission continues to meet in Geneva while its technical sub-group still convenes in the border area between Kuwait and Iraq. Despite the formal nature of such regular meetings, which attract media attention, there has in effect been no progress in determining the fate of these missing persons. In fact, the Iraqi regime has been exploiting their fate as a bargaining chip in its diplomatic manoeuvres. Iraq also continues to refuse to return a great deal of Kuwaiti property taken from the public and private sectors, the most important of which is an air defence system and other military equipment, in addition to the principal State documents, which have been referred to in the Security Council as State memory.

"Among the other key obligations the Iraqi regime has failed to fulfil is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, a subject that is being handled by the Special Commission. In this context, even after seven years of formal acceptance of relevant conditions, Iraq continues to indulge its hobby of procrastination, subterfuge and deception. Iraq hides certain weapons only to acknowledge later their existence after the Special Commission secures definitive proof of Iraq's ownership of such weapons. It denies having certain types of missiles and biological components only to recant its assertions once the international teams of inspectors discover those items.

"Kuwait welcomes Security Council resolution 1111 (1997) regarding the extension of the implementation of the provisions of resolution 986 (1995), which aims at alleviating the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq. Indeed, the hardship faced by the people of Iraq has long persisted, due to the failure of the Iraqi regime to meet its obligations, and to its pursuit of a policy of procrastination and trickery. Iraq is called upon to follow a peaceful policy with neighbouring States in order to prove its good intentions. This is a substantive condition for the maintenance of regional security, which was shattered by the Iraqi regime.

"We in Kuwait have gone through bitter experiences with regard to the intentions of the Iraqi regime, which seeks territorial expansion, regional supremacy, and military superiority at the expense of neighbouring countries and of their peace and stability.

"In the light of our eager interest in the maintenance of security and stability in the region, we affirm the need to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

"The supreme goal is to build a solid regional system firmly rooted in common understanding among neighbouring States which seek to expand avenues of mutual interests. This can be achieved through respect for and non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and through civilized coexistence among neighbouring peoples. In this respect, I should point out that my country is concerned over the continued existence of the problem of the occupation by Iran of three United Arab Emirates islands. Here I wish to emphasize Kuwait's full commitment to the decision taken by the Gulf Cooperation Council on this subject.

"I wish also to call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond favourably to the peaceful initiative launched by His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of our sister United Arab Emirates, to engage in a serious dialogue that would take into account the inalienable rights of the United Arab Emirates to the islands in question, in accordance with the principles of good neighbourly relations, international law and the United Nations Charter.

"The question of the Middle East and the success of the peace process there are crucial matters for world peace and security. You follow with us with deep regret the paralysis which befell that process and the increasing frustration and tension throughout the region. The current stalemate has touched off a flurry of threats and recriminations. All this is the net sum of the concepts put out by the Israeli Government regarding the frame of reference underlying the peace process in the region.

"The Government of Israel has backtracked from the rules and principles of the Madrid Peace Conference and has replaced them by extraneous elements which contravene the rules unanimously agreed upon by the international community as a framework for the peace process, namely Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973),

together with the "land for peace" principle. Furthermore, Israel has not committed itself to implement bilateral agreements reached with the Palestinian Authority, including withdrawal from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Also, Israel has not desisted from its policies of annexing Arab Jerusalem, its Judaization and expansion of its illegal settlement in order to change the demographic composition of the Holy City which lies at the very core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this regard, we call upon the co-sponsors of the peace initiative to maintain even-handedness while doubling their efforts to revive the peace process in order to achieve a lasting, comprehensive and just resolution of the question of Palestine.

"The people of Palestine have suffered for too long the excruciating pain of oppression, homelessness and neglect. It is the inherent right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and to establish their own independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, similar to other peoples who gained independence, so that they may contribute, within their own capacity, towards building world peace.

"Along similar lines, Kuwait emphasizes the importance of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan, which has been under occupation since 1967. This question cannot be ignored if we desire the peace process to be complete. Indeed, the peace must be comprehensive, covering all tracks. It should be anchored in good faith, in respect for the rights of others and in mutual confidence. In this regard, we support Syria's position that negotiations with Israel should resume from the point where they halted instead of starting new rounds of talks whose terms of reference have not been defined. Kuwait also supports Lebanon's firm stand that Israel is duty-bound to implement all provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and to preserve Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This can be achieved only by full, unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, so that Lebanon could resume its traditional role in consolidating development and prosperity.

"Kuwait notes with deep regret that ethnic, factional and civil conflicts among tribal chiefs in both Afghanistan and Somalia still continue. We remain hopeful that the United Nations will take more effective steps to address these problems that have torn asunder those two countries and have continued to undermine regional security. We also appeal to all parties in these two countries to put an end to acts of violence and to put overall national interests ahead of their tribal and ethnic interests.

"Kuwait lauds international efforts to implement fully the Dayton Agreement, which aims at achieving security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and upholding international legitimacy at this stage. In this respect, we applaud the Security Council resolution to indict and prosecute certain political and military leaders in Bosnia and Rwanda for their crimes against humanity.

"We live in a world bursting with events. Distances have shrunk, interests have grown, and security dimensions have become more interlinked. Adverse developments in the South worry the population of the North. Failure of development efforts has given impetus to chaotic waves of hungry migrants. Threats resulting from peoples' frustrations have become interwoven. But, in our common pursuit of a better tomorrow, we must act on the basis of a universal conviction that armaments by themselves do not guarantee full security, that development is the core of progress, that dialogue is the bridge to understanding and that serious work gives birth to hope. Giving is an obligation, not an act of charity. Respect among nations is a key to stability, and self-improvement is a motive for work. Participation is the path to cooperation. Monopoly is one of the evils of bygone days, and openness is the road to a better future. Investments are the tools of development. Bigotry is repugnant to contemporary international relations. People prosper in a civilized environment that imbues them with the virtues of doing good and giving, reaching out towards those in need and moving against the odds in efforts to create a world that exudes friendship and amity, a world resting on the rules of international legality, a world enjoying security, peace and prosperity.

"Our last prayer is to bless Allah, the lord of the universe."

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ablassé Ouedraogo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): Sir, your rich experience in the United Nations system, your country — Ukraine — your current responsibilities and your personality assure us of the competence and dedication with which you will fulfil your mission as President of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We would like to extend our most sincere congratulations and our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Ismail Razali of Malaysia, for a full, hard-working and stimulating fifty-first session. We reiterate our encouragement and support to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We also wish to commend the work which he and his team have accomplished in only nine months.

Last Thursday, 25 September, the Security Council issued a statement on the situation in Africa, in which it said:

> "The Security Council reaffirms the responsibility of all Member States to settle their international disputes by peaceful means and its own primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations." (*S/PRST/1997/46*)

Burkina Faso shares this vision. Together with other African countries, it has become involved in subregional and regional initiatives with regard to our brother countries of Liberia, the Central African Republic and Burundi, to name only a few. Burkina Faso, whose confidence has been strengthened by that experience, reaffirms the inestimable value of preventive diplomacy. We therefore support any action designed to achieve that end, and call upon the United Nations to develop a genuine conflict-prevention policy. From north to south and from west to east, African States have been taking action on a continuous basis and in a variety of ways to deal with armed conflicts, political instability and internal disorder in our continent.

Africa is daily demonstrating its clear determination to solve its own problems as a matter of priority by creating, among other things, a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Having made the maximum regional contribution, therefore, to the resolution of these problems, it wonders why the Security Council seems not to be responding. Where does the Security Council's chief responsibility lie? The worst thing that could happen to the Organization would be for Member States to begin to believe that our common institution has two different yardsticks. Our statements and appeals would then no longer be of any value, and our possible actions would be affected, and weakened.

The purposes enshrined in the United Nations Charter — peace and security and economic and social development — can only be attained, consolidated and maintained by means of justice within nations, justice among nations and, therefore, justice throughout the world. The task is enormous. The justice demanded would not imply the end of the influence of power, but it would indicate whether such influence was positive or negative.

With regard to disarmament, we must reaffirm the necessity of working towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical or biological.

In Africa, the illicit traffic in small arms has had new and increasingly uncontrollable consequences, ranging from an increase in armed criminal acts to the proliferation of armed refugees. This provokes and adds to the instability of entire regions. My delegation would like to know what has become of the follow-up to the Secretary-General's initiative under resolution 51/45 L on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them.

Burkina Faso welcomes the results of the Oslo conference on anti-personnel landmines, and urges all States to adhere as quickly as possible to the Convention adopted in Oslo, and above all to comply with its terms.

Burkina Faso remains concerned by all situations of turmoil, instability and conflict, from Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia to Cambodia.

The illusions harboured after the end of the cold war are now giving way to a contrasting vision in which the factors of integration and disintegration in our world are becoming clearer. In Africa, the tragedy in Somalia has been followed by tragedies in the Great Lakes region and the Republic of Congo, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now embarking, with some hesitation, upon the road towards restoration. In Liberia, elections finally allowing that country to recover, too, and to contemplate the colossal task of national reconstruction are taking place. However, in the neighbouring country of Sierra Leone constitutional order has been violated and flouted.

Burkina Faso reaffirms its resolute condemnation of the interruption of the democratic process in Sierra Leone as well as its adherence to decision 356, on the situation in Sierra Leone, taken by the Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity at its thirty-third summit meeting in Harare.

We welcome the significant advances made in Angola and urge all the parties, especially UNITA, to play a constructive role.

In the Middle East, Burkina Faso is concerned about the repeated setbacks to the peace process and calls on the parties to ensure that acts of provocation do not create a deadly chain of violence that would go against the interests of the peoples of the region.

The international environment is undergoing a process of constant change under the combined effect of three phenomena: globalization of the economy and of threats; liberalization of markets; and the information and communications revolution. While we welcome the creation and consolidation of large economic and monetary groupings throughout the world, the upheavals created by globalization and the demands of a triumphant free-market model illustrate the fragile nature of the successes achieved, and show more clearly that moderation and justice are the basic requirements.

Africa, like a patient being cared for on his sick-bed, has heard and heeded the diagnosis and the suggested remedies, including programmes, projects, agendas and special initiatives. This continent, which is engaged in a constant struggle, is achieving some results that run the risk of being wiped out by globalization, in that its international trade is continuing to decrease as a result mainly of outside factors, further increasing its marginalization.

Developing countries expect the Agenda for Development, adopted during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, to be a catalyst for a new global partnership for development. The sincerity of the commitment of each and every one of us will be judged according to the effectiveness of its implementation. In this regard, and on all economic and environmental issues, we support the comments made on behalf of us all by Tanzania, which holds the presidency of the Group of 77.

Burkina Faso, together with other Member States, has asked for consideration of the need to review resolution 2758 (XXVI), which excludes from the United Nations the Republic of China on Taiwan. In doing so, Burkina Faso has no intention of violating the rights of another Member State. It merely asks that, given the new context, the reality of the Republic of China be acknowledged. This reality is demonstrated by the many and various relations that the Republic of China has in one form or another with most States. A review would do justice to the 21.5 million inhabitants while work goes on to resolve the matter by the reunification desired by both sides.

While we continue to call for respect for human rights and respect for freedoms, there is still concern that it has not yet been possible to implement a position that the General Assembly has affirmed and reaffirmed, year after year. The principle of freedom of trade is overtly being violated, and Cuba, a Member State, is the victim. Burkina Faso believes that the international community must continue its efforts to convince all the parties concerned that since the embargo and obstacles to free trade have not yet resolved the dispute, new constructive paths must be explored.

Similarly, along with the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Burkina Faso affirms the need to find a solution to the dispute between Libya, the United States and the United Kingdom with regard to the Lockerbie tragedy. As well as the sufferings of the families of those who perished, many other people are continuing to suffer from the sanctions imposed against Libya. The Organization of African Unity has always expressed its concern at the unremitting sanctions imposed on Libya and their humanitarian consequences for its people, and has advocated a fair trial of the suspects pursuant to accepted principles of justice and international law. With the OAU, Burkina Faso hopes that the Security Council will give due attention to the proposal made jointly by the Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States with a view to finding a just and equitable solution to the crisis.

Speaking of the Security Council, a permanent member of the Council used the formula that it is far better to support a proposal for change backed by a large majority than to support a status quo that enjoys the support of almost no one. Such reform is now a necessity with regard to which Africa has developed a common position. Africa, which was absent in 1945, intends to gain recognition for its right to a place in the Security Council, in which most of the matters dealt with are African. Two permanent seats and some non-permanent seats would represent the beginning of justice for a

continent which, along with Latin America, has no permanent representation. Burkina Faso believes that the enlargement of the Security Council, while including Japan and Germany, must necessarily provide equitable representation for Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In addition to the Council's composition, its functioning must also be reviewed. The future Security Council must no longer be a body that behaves all too often like a club for the privileged; rather, it must behave like an institution imbued with the highest responsibilities and aspirations for the benefit of all, without discrimination. Without that understanding, reform will be futile.

At the fifty-first session, I concluded by saying:

> "We are now seeing that the State is surrendering control over certain elements of its sovereignty. Everywhere, structures and organizations with varying degrees of legality are transcending States and establishing transnational networks and relations. It is therefore imperative that we keep pace with these trends and adapt now and in the future our special instrument, our common instrument: the United Nations at the service of peoples. Political will is what will make the difference." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 20th meeting, p. 24*]

Earlier today, speaking of the globalization of the economy, I also mentioned the globalization of threats. I had in mind poverty, environmental deterioration, terrorism, drug trafficking, pandemics and, in general, the great disasters caused by man or by nature.

The United Nations is in this regard an irreplaceable and invaluable tool. We thank and most warmly commend our brother Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, who, in the space of nine months, has produced proposals designed to keep us all in step with the times and future challenges. In our quest for peace, security, progress, prosperity and justice, the Secretary-General is proposing that we define and redefine the instrument of our solidarity and our common condition. Burkina Faso will join wholeheartedly in this exercise and will support any movement that can lead us to development, which is one of the cardinal points of our quest and a platform on which all of the United Nations essential missions can come together: the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of justice and international law, the strengthening of cooperation for development, the protection of human rights and humanitarian assistance.

While we welcome and applaud the generous contribution a wealthy individual has made to the United Nations, we must also remind all States that their contributions are a fulfilment of solemn and voluntary commitments. Contributions to the budget must be made in full, on time and without conditions. This is also part of the needed reform.

The developments we are witnessing are profoundly contradictory. The future is marked by pairs of opposites — integration and disintegration; stability and instability; wealth and poverty; health and incurable disease; the opening and closing of borders; democracies and dictatorships; *inter alia*. They, it is said, are the very stuff of life.

The pendulum swings from optimism to pessimism and then back again. To stop it as it swings towards optimism, we will need, as never before, to see to it that the international community can find and cultivate the virtues of inclusion and justice, for otherwise we will see develop before our eyes, to an increasing degree, a world of cruel and pitiless violence.

The United Nations is our chance for a world of hope, justice, peace and progress. Let us seize this chance.

The President: I now call on His Excellency the Honourable Kamal Thapa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): First of all, on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal and on my own behalf, I should like to extend to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I am confident that with your rich experience in international affairs you will guide the work of the Assembly to a successful conclusion. I wish also to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your responsibilities.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer our deep appreciation and thanks to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, Ambassador Razali Ismail of the friendly country of Malaysia, for the enthusiasm, dedication and zeal he brought to bear on the work of the previous session.

To Secretary-General Kofi Annan, I bring greetings and best wishes from Nepal. In every way, he is proving

himself worthy of the great trust the membership has placed in him. Having shown his deep commitment to United Nations reform from the day of his appointment as Secretary-General, he has presented us with a set of very serious and far-reaching proposals of impressive breadth and scope, with a view to reshaping the United Nations so that it can better serve humanity in the years ahead.

The Secretary-General has asked us to make this session of the General Assembly one of reform. We agree with him that United Nations reform is the shared concern of all Member States and that the purpose of the reform is to strengthen the role of the United Nations and enhance its efficiency. In the aftermath of the end of the cold war, the world situation is continuously undergoing profound changes, evolving progressively towards a world of multipolarity which reinforces the core of the United Nations Charter: peace and development in larger freedom.

The universal cause, therefore, is to make the United Nations a more vibrant world Organization that is more properly equipped, institutionally and financially, to meet the evolving challenges of the next century.

The proposals of the Secretary-General complement the ongoing intergovernmental process regarding the revitalization of the United Nations, particularly financial reform and reform of the Security Council.

The United Nations, if it is to perform the mission set out in its Charter, cannot limp from one year to another on the verge of bankruptcy. No country should bear an excessive burden, but the fundamental principle of any scale of assessments should be the capacity to pay, calculated on the basis of the country's share of global gross national product. It also does not make sense that half the total membership is assessed the same amount in contributions. A change in the scale of assessments is overdue. Countries, rich and poor, must pay their assessed share in full, on time and without conditions.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, the organ which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, Nepal's position coincides basically with the position taken by the Non-Aligned Movement, as reflected, in particular, in the Cartagena summit Declaration and the subsequent Declarations of the meetings of Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Security Council should better reflect changes in contemporary political and economic realities. It should be more representative in composition and more transparent in its functioning. It must be more democratic in character. It must be more reflective of balance between the North and South. It must, above all, be capable of prompt action when peace is threatened. The contribution of Member States to international peace and security should be the guiding criterion for the selection of Members of the expanded Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories. Since the Security Council is the principal instrument of the international community in the area of collective security, I must emphasize here that any reform must be the fruit of ratifiable global consensus and must in no way diminish the Council's capacity for prompt and effective action to maintain international peace and security.

In the view of my delegation, the reform proposals of the Secretary-General, which deserve our appreciation and support, are categorized in three broad areas: management of conflicts and peacekeeping; strengthening and integration at headquarters, and field levels of United Nations development activities; and protection and promotion of human rights.

Too often in the past, the United Nations has suffered from a sore need for a capacity to act in the face of conflicts. The Secretary-General must be encouraged and supported financially to make use of his high office for the resolution of emerging conflicts. When peacekeeping operations are mandated by the Security Council, the capacity of the Secretary-General to organize and mount them in time should be strengthened. Peacekeeping, to be effective, is dependent largely on the maintenance of elements within the national armed forces of Member States that can be made available promptly to the United Nations. Sixty-six countries are now participating in United Nations standby arrangements, and I am happy to say that Nepal is one of the 10 countries to sign the Memorandum of Understanding which commits my country to contribute 2,000 troops, including doctors, engineers, observers and headquarters staff and 200 civilian monitors for peacekeeping purposes, at short notice. It is high time that the rapidly deployable mission headquarters became operational.

Nepal is confident that the Secretary-General's proposals for a new United Nations Development Group and a United Nations Development Assistance Framework will provide clearer focus and direction to United Nations development activities aimed at sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. In Nepal, many of the development activities carried out by the United Nations are already practically integrated

at the field level. Care has to be taken, however, that in the name of integration or merger, the demonstrated strength of individual programmes, funds or agencies is not lost. We also find the proposal for a Special Commission to look at the division of labour among the various specialized agencies across the United Nations system very interesting and deserving of careful consideration. With a view to achieving greater harmonization of international development efforts, Nepal feels the need for a closer relationship between the United Nations and international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization.

Since peace, progress and humanity are the core concern of the United Nations, Nepal, as a functioning democracy with a deep commitment to human rights, appreciates the intention of the Secretary-General to strengthen and broaden the capacity of the United Nations in the field of human rights. We welcome the strengthening of the Human Rights secretariat and the choice of Mrs. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, as High Commissioner for Human Rights. There could hardly be a better choice. I wish to congratulate the new High Commissioner and express the confidence of my delegation that she will be an independent and credible defender of human rights. We welcome her determination to narrow the gap in the perception of human rights. She has rightly observed that collective and individual rights are not mutually exclusive and that the scope of human rights is interlinked with social, cultural and economic issues requiring a broad approach.

As a signatory of all basic international human rights instruments and a participant in the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Nepal looks forward to the fiftieth anniversary next year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Together with freedom of speech and belief, the Declaration characterizes freedom from fear and freedom from want as the highest aspirations of human beings. Along with concerns for peace and sustainable development, it is right that concerns for human rights should also be made an integral part of the work of the United Nations.

Peace in many parts of the world continues to remain fragile. Nepal is deeply concerned over the setbacks in the peace process in the Middle East. The settlements policy has retarded the process. Nor has the spate of violence in the region helped restore the mutual confidence without which no peace process can succeed.

Without a resolution to the Palestinian problem, no comprehensive, just and lasting peace will be possible in the Middle East. We urge the concerned parties not to deviate from their professed commitment to resolving the problem through peaceful means.

The extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty represent a fine moment in the history of nuclear-arms control and disarmament. The Convention on Chemical Weapons has come into force, to our great satisfaction. With the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa last year, we hope that efforts to create such zones in other regions, such as the Middle East and South Asia, will be relentlessly pursued.

Disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, means nothing if it does not provide security to nations and peoples. Only a complete elimination of nuclear weapons will provide such security. It is in this spirit that we have supported the programme of action advanced by 28 NAM and neutral countries, members of the Conference on Disarmament, for the elimination of nuclear weapons through phases over a period of time. We are disappointed by the complete lack of progress in this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Nepal is in favour of strengthening the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the principal global disarmament negotiating forum.

Nepal welcomes the agreement in Oslo this month on the text of a convention for the total ban on anti-personnel landmines and will seriously consider signing the convention in Ottawa in December. Landmines should not be allowed to be used indiscriminately and to maim and take innocent lives, including those of women and children.

While the importance of the issues of weapons of mass destruction cannot be overemphasized, it is to be noted that it is conventional weapons that have killed the most people throughout history. Therein lies the importance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The work of the United Nations Panel of Experts on Small Arms, one of whose sessions was hosted in Kathmandu this year, has laid the foundation for future United Nations action in this area.

Confidence-building measures and regular dialogues in informal settings represent an indispensable element in the long and arduous efforts undertaken on behalf of disarmament and security. I am pleased to note that the

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, located in Kathmandu, has been found to be a useful forum for such informal dialogues on disarmament and security issues.

Nepal's consistent participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations reflects our abiding faith in the ideals of the United Nations. Over the past four decades, Nepal's peacekeepers have served with pride in all regions of the world under the United Nations for the cause of peace. Many of the Nepalese Blue Helmets have lost their lives and limbs in the pursuit of peace. Nepalese soldiers have served the United Nations with dedication and professionalism. Nepal will continue to serve the cause of peace by responding positively and promptly to every call for assistance from the United Nations.

The adoption of An Agenda for Development this year, following protracted and tortuous negotiations over a period of three years, is a welcome sign for the renewal of development cooperation between the North and South. The Agenda identifies groups of countries in special need: least developed countries, Africa, landlocked developing countries, small island developing countries and countries with transitional economies. The usefulness of the Agenda will be measured only in terms of its faithful implementation. The provision of additional resources on an assured and predictable basis is a prerequisite to the sustainable development of the least developed and landlocked countries.

The decision of the General Assembly last year establishing the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty represents the long-awaited recognition by the international community of the pervasive nature of poverty, which today is the greatest threat to peace, sustainable development and human rights. The eradication of poverty, therefore, should be a core activity of the United Nations. We recognize that this is the principal thrust of the reform measures and proposals of the Secretary-General. I wish once again to pledge my country's full support and cooperation to the Secretary-General in this regard. Poverty alleviation is the priority area of sustainable development planning in Nepal. A massive programme is needed to reduce poverty in a meaningful way.

The rapid decline of living standards today in almost all the least developed countries and developing landlocked countries is an ironic testimony to the gross marginalization of those countries, despite the new trade regime that is supposed to usher in an era of prosperity throughout the world. This anomaly is further compounded by the accelerating reduction of official development assistance to the least developed countries. For the least developed countries, and the landlocked among them, which suffer from additional physical handicaps, foreign direct investment cannot be a substitute for official development assistance for some time to come.

I would like to affirm Nepal's unreserved condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and our determination to prevent terrorists from deriving benefit from their acts. It is our firm position that terrorism is a threat to both internal and international security and to peaceful relations between States. It is, moreover, a threat to the growth and functioning of democratic institutions and to the enjoyment of human rights all over the world. Nepal will never allow its territory to be used by terrorists against other countries.

Nepal holds the view that States should create an environment in which people do not have to be displaced or flee their countries as refugees. The number of such people is in millions and, in the words of the Secretary-General, unquantifiable. Nepal is also bearing the burden of refugees. Nepal being a least developed and landlocked country struggling to cope with the rising aspirations of its people in a parliamentary set-up with deep human-rights commitments, the burden is painful for us. We have received international humanitarian assistance, for which we are grateful. The magnitude of the problem for us can be judged by the fact that one in every 200 people in Nepal today is a refugee. We uphold the right of the refugees to return to their home in peace and honour. His Majesty's Government of Nepal is determined to solve the problem peacefully by dialogue.

Nepal is a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Nepal is actively pursuing a policy of promoting regional cooperation and understanding under the umbrella of SAARC, an Association which forms a critical part of our broad policy of peace, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and non-alignment.

The seven countries of the region are engaged in various areas of cooperation, including the suppression of terrorism and drug abuse, environmental preservation, poverty alleviation and the promotion of regional trade. We are endeavouring to harmonize the policies of the seven member countries on important global issues. We did so during the nineteenth special session of the

General Assembly devoted to environment and sustainable development. Many ministerial meetings in the region are now annual events. Foreign Ministers of the region will be meeting in New York in an informal setting during the annual session of the General Assembly. SAARC has lagged behind other similar associations, but the countries of the region are persevering in their efforts to develop both the habit and concrete measures of cooperation.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): We have been surprised by the fact that the gentleman from South Korea this morning attempted to infuse antagonism and confrontation with distorted allegations against us at the time when prominent personalities of the world are engaging in constructive deliberations on the enhancement of the United Nations role in the twenty-first century in an atmosphere of reconciliation and cooperation. We strongly reject his allegations, which are characterized by falseness and political illiteracy aimed at misleading world opinion.

As for chemical weapons, it was none other than the United States and South Korea that introduced and used chemical weapons in the Korean peninsula. Therefore, the South Korean authorities have no right whatsoever to talk about the Chemical Weapons Convention. My country was a direct victim of biochemical-weapon attacks by the United States and South Korea during the Korean War in the 1950s. The fact that South Korea, which is the offender, is slandering my country while maintaining a huge storage of chemical weapons is nothing but a deceptive plot to keep behind a screen its preparations for new biochemical-weapons warfare. It remains exclusively the sovereign right of each State whether or not to accede to the Convention on the ban of chemical weapons.

South Korea's imitation of exactly what was said by the United States — which is the suzerain State of South Korea — in regard to anti-personnel landmines is arousing great disappointment on the part of the international community.

As for the issue of human rights, South Korea is actually a human rights desert on the Korean peninsula which causes grave concern to the international community. The present social system in South Korea inevitably leads to a systematic and consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights. This is because the national security law, which completely denies all rights and freedoms — including the right to chose ideology and freedom of expression and opinion, which are stipulated in international human rights instruments — has been in existence as a legal apparatus to prop up such a social system for the past half century.

The national security law has so far produced a large number of prisoners of conscience, including long-term political prisoners, and is still being used as a panacea to suppress the non-violent political activities of dissidents and organizations, including "Manchongryon", the South Korean student organization.

According to initial statistics there are hundreds of prisoners of conscience, including long-term political prisoners such as Messrs. An Hak Sop and Han Jang Ho and many others who have been imprisoned for more than 40 years, twice as long as the term served by President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, who was once known in the world as the longest-serving prisoner. They have been languishing in prison cells 0.7 square metres in size, without seeing a single ray of the sun from the age of 20 years up to 60 or 70 years. Only after their deaths can they be released.

Whether thousands or tens of thousands more such prisoners of conscience are yet to be known remains the only secret of the South Korean authorities. As long as such anti-human rights laws as the national security law linger like a nightmare, the situation of human rights violations in South Korea will remain unchanged. The international community has already stigmatized the national security law as a root cause of the human rights violations and called for its abolition accordingly.

Even the United States, suzerain State of South Korea, could no longer protect South Korea and made it clear that the abolition of the national security law was its official position. It is imperative that the South Korean authorities keep in mind that their regime cannot automatically become a civilian regime simply by being decorated with a civilian wrapper.

We take this opportunity to recommend to South Korea that it discontinue becoming the object of

international denunciation by abolishing the national security law, democratizing its society and unconditionally releasing all prisoners of conscience.

We have much more to say to South Korea with regard to the four-party talks. The United States and South Korean sides explained that the proposed four-party talks are intended to ensure durable peace on the Korean peninsula. In order to achieve this peace, the present armistice system should be replaced without delay with a durable peace agreement and the United States troops stationed in South Korea should be withdrawn. This is the common sense which is crystal clear to everyone.

However, during the previous two rounds of preliminary talks, the South Korean side strongly opposed the deliberations of these issues, contrary to the aforementioned purposes of the talks. Instead it insisted that the four-party talks should focus mainly on the issue concerning the relations between the North and the South of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea maintains its stance that it is undesirable to discuss the issue of North-South relations at the multilateral talks because this is an internal issue of the nation. Therefore, the claim on the part of the South Korean side for the deliberation of the internal views of the nation at the multilateral talks is an expression devoid of any national independence and an anti-national act to induce foreign interferences.

South Korea cosmeticized itself as if it were an angel in providing humanitarian assistance. This is nothing but sheer hypocrisy. To be frank with you, Sir, South Korea is clamouring ostensibly about the humanitarian assistance to my country, and after turning its back it is resorting to sinister attempts to lay obstacles to the provision of humanitarian assistance by other countries and governmental and non-governmental international organizations by saying that the assistance was diverted in full for the use of the military and that there would be good farming this year.

In 1984, when South Korea was afflicted by floods the Democratic People's Republic of Korea generously provided a large quantity of cooperation in a noble humanitarian and compatriotic spirit. As long as South Korea attempts to use the issue of humanitarian cooperation for its unjust political purpose, we have no intention of receiving any cooperation as such. We urge the South Korean authorities to immediately discontinue abusing the issue of humanitarian cooperation to pursue their political purposes to stifle and isolate our Republic.

As for the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, the South Korean authorities — who have introduced foreign nuclear weapons into the country to destroy our nation — have not any qualification whatsoever to comment on it. To repeat, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is a bilateral one to be settled only between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. The South Korean authorities should just sit down and enjoy watching the process rather than behaving ridiculously on the nuclear issue. We sincerely wish the South Korean authorities would behave with a spirit of national independence, cease to depend upon foreign forces at the earliest possible date, and discontinue abusing the sacred forum of the United Nations for North-South confrontation.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Speaking at this morning's plenary meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Nicolae Tabakaru, stated that there continued to be an illegitimate deployment of contingents of the Russian Federation on the territory of his country, and that this contradicted the principle of international law that foreign troops could not be deployed on the territory of a State without its agreement. In this connection, our delegation is authorized to respond as follows.

That statement is in contradiction with the agreement of the Presidents of Russia and Moldova which was reached during recent meetings in September in Moscow, whose essence is that the number of Russian troops in Transdniester are constantly being reduced. However, the final withdrawal of these troops without a political settlement of the problem of Transdniester could lead to uncontrolled development of the situation, especially since there are major arsenals in that region.

As is well known, the Russian Federation is taking an active part in promoting the earliest possible settlement in Transdniester. This role of our country was noted by the head of the Moldovan delegation in his statement today.

It is our view that the problem should be settled on the basis of defining a special status for the Transdniester region while preserving the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. This principle was in fact reflected in the memorandum signed on 8 May this year in Moscow on the principles of normalizing relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transdniester.

The process of restoring normal life and dialogue between the parties is not developing as simply as one would wish. A great deal of painstaking work is continuing, with the involvement of the Russian side, which is encountering certain complications and emotional features. These can be overcome only by means of determined and peaceful efforts.

In the framework of the close bilateral relations between Kishinev and Moscow, the President and the Government of the Republic of Moldova show a clear understanding of this reality. However, in his statement the head of the delegation of the Republic of Moldova gave a different interpretation to the situation. This raises some questions, bearing in mind the fact that only a few days ago the deputy Chairman of the Russian Government, Mr. Serov, visited Moldova and talked with the leadership of the Republic of Moldova and the leaders of Transdniester. During those negotiations, the Russian side did not hear anything similar to what we heard today from this rostrum.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we are convinced that the process of a settlement in Transdniester is possible, but for this it is important to retain its constructive dynamics. From the Russian side, everything is being done so that this process can prevail.

Mr. Lim (Republic of Korea): It is regrettable, though not entirely surprising, that our North Korean colleague has presented another typically unproductive statement against the Republic of Korea. Although he referred to several issues, I wish to speak mainly about the human rights question for the sake of his own enlightenment and for the information of other delegations, as my Foreign Minister explained in full detail our position on the other issues this morning.

First and foremost, I would like to ask my North Korean colleague if he truly believes North Korea is in any position to call into question human rights anywhere in the world. The concept of human rights is complex and multidimensional, and therefore any debate on this issue tends to be contentious and inconclusive. On the other hand, however, discussing North Korea's human rights situation is simple.

Politically, it is a well known fact that North Korea has been sustained by a totalitarian system which has now taken the shape of the world's first communist dynasty. Is this a system which encourages, or even allows, political participation by its citizens? I seriously doubt it.

Economically, I am equally sceptical that the basic human needs of ordinary North Koreans are being met by their leadership — a leadership which claims it has created a workers' paradise. I wonder how it reconciles this concept of paradise with North Korea's current economic situation?

Socially, North Koreans live in the grip of unimaginable control and subjugation. Indeed, the fundamental freedoms of movement, speech and assembly are totally alien to the people of North Korea.

On the international front, North Korea has shown how woefully out of step it is with the rest of the world by announcing its intention to withdraw from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in response to a resolution concerning the human rights situation in North Korea adopted at this year's session of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

If anything remains unclear about the human rights situation in North Korea it is always possible to refer to Amnesty International's reports, which contain vivid information about, among other things, the large-scale concentration camps for political prisoners throughout North Korea.

All in all, I believe that the description of North Korea in a survey of The Freedom House as

"the worst among the most repressive States"

provides a quick summary of the human rights situation in North Korea.

The North Korean representative also spoke at length about our national security law. What he failed to mention, however, was why that law was enacted. To put it bluntly, we needed such a law because North Korea continues to dispatch armed agents to the Republic of Korea, as evidenced by the North Korean submarine infiltration incident last September. In fact, North Korea's Communist Party Charter still stipulates the reunification of the two sides of Korea under communist rule as a primary objective.

Against that backdrop, my delegation considers it nothing short of preposterous for the North Korean delegation to question the human rights situation of another State.

If North Korea still insists on discussing human rights it should first of all open its own hermetically sealed society to the world, especially to human rights organizations, so that we can all see exactly what is going on inside its borders.

In the absence of any objective information or corroborative evidence to the contrary, North Korea's baseless assertions will continue to ring as hollow as before.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I do not feel there is any need to refute categorically the intervention of the South Korean representative, which was again characterized by political illiteracy and went against human nature.

As all delegations have just witnessed, the South Korean authorities are still inciting confrontation between the north and the south of Korea, even at this sacred forum of the United Nations.

For the sake of increasing the understanding of the distinguished representatives, let me briefly refer to one stark reality. In recent years, the Governments of various countries, international organizations and other relevant organizations — irrespective of their differences in social systems, political views and religious beliefs — have been providing generous humanitarian assistance to my country, which has been suffering from a series of natural disasters. We are very grateful to all of these Governments and organizations for their sincere assistance.

However, the South Korean authorities are attempting to destroy the international atmosphere for humanitarian assistance by bringing into the United States people who committed crimes in my country and defected to South Korea some years ago out of fear of prosecution. And the South Korean authorities have organized a press conference to take place during the current General Assembly session. They are even saying that this humanitarian assistance should not be provided to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has stocks of extra food. Under such circumstances how can we communicate with the South Korean authorities, who are devoid of humanity, rather than sharing our nationality?

These attempts are anti-national and anti-ethical and certainly deserve condemnation from the international community. This shows the reality of North and South Korean relations, which the South Korean authorities often clamour about.

Mr. Lim (Republic of Korea): I am once again rather disappointed that the North Korean delegation has either failed to understand, or pretended to ignore, how they are actually perceived by the international community. This time, however, our response will be short, as we don't wish to involve other delegations in a discussion the outcome of which may be easily predicted by everyone in this Hall — except, probably, one delegation.

Just for reference, I would just like to inform other delegations in this Hall that as the single largest donor, the Republic of Korea has provided North Korea with $280 million of food and financial aid since 1995.

The President: The Observer of Palestine has asked to make a statement in reply. I give him the floor in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*):

(spoke in English)

Let me first say that I believe that the arrangements by the Secretariat for this segment of our meeting are not consistent with established practice. This is something, however, which we will discuss later with the Secretariat — under your auspices, Sir, I hope.

(spoke in Arabic)

Here in this Hall today the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel discussed the situation. I am surprised at his extraordinary ability to give an opposite view of what is going on in the field.

The peace process in the Middle East is experiencing a real crisis that — as a result of the current Israeli Government's policies and practices — might bring the process to an end. Since its inception that Government has adopted general guidelines that run counter to the agreements between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. That Government has also continued settlement practices: confiscating land, bringing in more settlers and confiscating more Palestinian natural resources. It has also expressed its views through its

Prime Minister on developing future settlements which include the taking over of about half of the Palestinian territory that has been occupied since 1967. These views also include exclusive Jewish ownership of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) — including its Arab part which is under occupation.

These new policies have been accompanied by the escalation of repression of the Palestinian people: the imposition of a blockade on our economy, the prevention of movement of persons and goods, the destruction of homes and the confiscation of the identity cards of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. The Israeli Government has violated everything: international law, relevant Security Council resolutions, resolutions of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the agreements reached between the two parties and, finally, the very bases of the peace process.

The Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs talked about terrorism. Our position is quite clear: we condemn terrorism. We have opposed it, and we believe terrorism should continue to be condemned, irrespective of its sources. We must condemn terrorist acts committed by extremists on both sides, regardless of its size on the two sides or the losses resulting from them. Final elimination of violence and terrorism will not be accomplished except by upholding the peace process and achieving the requisite progress politically and economically. It will be accomplished by creating a different environment, one that corresponds with mutual recognition, respect for the rights of the parties, instead of expansionist policies, arrogance and policies of repression.

The Minister warned against the United Nations dealing with the issue. This is ironic. He himself referred to General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which constitutes the legal basis for the existence of Israel. Since then the United Nations has a permanent responsibility for the Palestinian question, until it is solved. This responsibility cannot end by the mere beginning of the peace process.

International law, including the resolutions of the Security Council, is valid and cannot be replaced or reduced in importance by any transitional agreements. The fiftieth anniversary of Israel is a strong reminder of the anniversary of the tragedy of the Palestinian people, who are awaiting the fulfilment of the other part of resolution 181, the establishment of the Arab State. This, God willing, will take place soon, thanks to our struggle and thanks to the support of the international community, which is based on justice and the desire to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Today we heard about some positive developments in Palestinian-Israeli bilateral relations. We hope that these will lead to the creation of a new reality that will supplant statements such as those made today and that will be in harmony with the bases of the peace process in the Middle East and the agreements that have been reached between the two parties.

The President: There are no further speakers for this afternoon's meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.